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Still waiting on AP's story.

## **SANDOVAL REBUFFS EFFORTS TO NAME NEVADA MINE A SUPERFUND SITE**

By Sandra Chereb  
Las Vegas Review-Journal Capital Bureau

CARSON CITY — Gov. Brian Sandoval told federal environmental regulators Friday there are no imminent health concerns at an abandoned copper mine near Yerington to demand immediate listing as a national priority for Superfund cleanup.

In a letter to Jared Blumenfeld, regional administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency in San Francisco, Sandoval insisted the state be given more time to work with local officials and industry leaders in the Northern Nevada community on a solution.

Sandoval said he was assured by state environmental officials "that there is no imminent health concerns at the site that require immediate action" and a fluid management system to prevent contamination from toxic ponds is preventing releases to the environment.

"The state acknowledges the need for a permanent closure of the Arimetco heaps, but not the dire nature of the situation and urgency conveyed in your letter," Sandoval wrote.

Blumenfeld notified Sandoval in December that the EPA would proceed with adding the site to its national priority list and gave the state until Friday to respond. The EPA already considers the mine a Superfund site, but adding it to the national priority list is required to tap federal funding for cleanup.

Anaconda Copper purchased the Lyon County mine in the early 1940s. It was bought in the 1970s by Atlantic Richfield Co., now a subsidiary of BP. Those operations ceased in 1982.

The site covering about 3,400 acres near Yerington, a rural farming community 65 miles southeast of Reno, was sold a few more times and was last owned by Arimetco, which went bankrupt in 1997 and abandoned the site in 2000, EPA documents show.

In 2013 residents who filed a class action lawsuit won a \$19 million settlement on their claims that owners tried to hide contamination from uranium, arsenic and other toxic substances found

in drinking water wells. Some studies have shown about 80 percent of wells near the mine contained dangerous levels of toxins.

The EPA says risks to public health and the environment continue and it wants to add the site to the national priority list for cleanup, a designation state and local officials have opposed out of fear the stigma would hurt economic development and the rural economy.

Sandoval reiterated those concerns in his response to the EPA and said the state views a priority listing "as an option of last resort."

A listing, he said, "is no guarantee that funding will be available when needed."

The only other Superfund site in Nevada is an 80-mile stretch of the lower Carson River, which was formally added to the national priority list in 1990 because of mercury, arsenic and lead contamination from mining activity on the historic Comstock in the 1800s. The designation remains in effect.

Sandoval said the state's experience with the Carson River site has shown that a listing "tends to cast uncertainty on economic activity" and the Superfund process "is inherently slow, uncertain and costly."

The governor said his administration met earlier this month with local officials and representatives from the agriculture and mining industries on an alternative option.

"During that meeting, local industry representatives expressed a willingness to make a financial commitment toward assisting with the closure of the Arimetco heaps," Sandoval wrote.

He said a follow-up meeting was held this week and more time is needed to try to work out an agreement.

Sandoval told the EPA he will update the agency on developments by April 29.

Last month, U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., urged the Republican governor to accept the priority listing, calling the mine a "cesspool full of very toxic substances."

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<http://m.reviewjournal.com/news/nevada/sandoval-rebuffs-efforts-name-nevada-mine-superfund-site>

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